

Granny Smith, an unusual cyber criminal

Wednesday, 10 April 2024 16:00 (5 minutes)

Summary

In 2023 GÉANT supported the Cybersecurity Month initiative with its security awareness campaign for the international R&E community: 'Become a Cyber Hero'. In a month-long journey into the world of cybersecurity, the campaign inspired and educated end-users on topics such as online privacy, phishing, social engineering, ransomware and the importance of reporting cyber incidents.

Full proposal

This lightning talk focusses on an innovative element of the 2023 GÉANT Cybersecurity Month campaign: the four-part animation series 'Cybercrime for Newbies'. Available in seven languages, the animations feature an unusual cyber-criminal, Granny Smith, a retired elderly lady who explains in vlog format how she finds her cyber victims and the tricks she uses to steal their data and even their money. The objective of the series is to illustrate with humour the common pitfalls and mistakes that end-users tend to make when faced with cyber threats, and ultimately how to avoid falling victim of cybercrime.

This talk highlights how, through a fresh and innovative story-telling approach, the series gives an insight into the mindset of cybercriminals showing how they think and operate, how they use online information and data easily accessible in the digital footprint that internet users leave behind. The talks also highlights how the Granny Smith animations, unlike other awareness campaigns, do not focus on user blaming or use scaremongering tactics.

Recent research in cybersecurity demonstrates that in a blame-centred cybersecurity culture, people are often reluctant to report errors, increasing the likelihood that organisations will suffer the consequences of cybercrime. Conversely a climate that embraces and promotes an open cybersecurity culture encourages employee engagement and heightened vigilance. Creating a culture that fosters and supports a cyber-vigilant workforce organisations can achieve significantly better outcomes in terms of reducing cyber risk.

Key take-aways

- Use story-telling to inspire, engage and connect with the audience, influence their feelings, ideas and behaviour.
- Don't be afraid to be creative and use humour in cybersecurity awareness campaigns.
- Stop adopting user-blaming tactics.

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